

NOTE: The address was recorded at 3:23 p.m. on March 17 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on March 18.

Statement on Proposed Line-Item Veto Legislation

March 20, 1995

The Senate is now debating the line-item veto legislation which passed last month in the House. I urge the Senate to pass the strongest possible line-item veto and to make it effective immediately. If the Members of Congress from both parties are serious about cutting the deficit, give me this line-item veto, and I will get started right away. This is one area where both parties can and should come together.

I have advocated the line-item veto for a very long time. When I was a Governor, I had a line-item veto and I balanced 12 budgets in a row. I advocated the line-item veto when I ran for President, and I have pushed for it since becoming President because it is a very effective tool for cutting wasteful Government spending and bringing down the deficit.

We have made great headway in cutting wasteful spending. We have already cut the Federal bureaucracy by 102,000 positions, on the way to cutting a quarter million. We are bringing the deficit down by more than \$600 billion. My new budget calls for another \$81 billion in deficit reduction.

But there is still too much waste in the Federal budget. This year I have proposed eliminating 131 programs altogether and consolidating 270 others. I proposed many of these spending cuts last year and the year before, only to have Congress tell me I couldn't cut their pet projects. I tried to cut \$16 million for the Small Business Administration's tree planting program. But Congress put it back in the budget. Congress even spent \$12 million for a cattle tick eradication project.

Well, this year, if the Congress gives me the line-item veto, I will cut each one of these programs, and a whole lot more. I also think the line-item veto should be applied to the revenue as well as the spending sides of the budget, so I can curb wasteful tax and spending provisions.

This is really about closing the door on business-as-usual in Washington. If Congress is serious about changing the way Washington works and getting a handle on wasteful spending, they will put politics aside, stand up to the special interests, and pass the bill.

The President, no matter what party, needs the line-item veto to bring discipline to the budget process. I urge the Senate to pass it and make it effective right now.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Welfare Reform

March 20, 1995

Dear Mr. Speaker:

This week, the historic national debate we have begun on welfare reform will move to the floor of the House of Representatives. Welfare reform is a top priority for my Administration and for Americans without regard to party. I look forward to working with Republicans and Democrats in both houses of Congress to enact real reform that promotes work and responsibility and makes welfare what it was meant to be: a second chance, not a way of life.

In the last two years, we have put the country on the road to ending welfare as we know it. In 1993, when Congress passed our economic plan, we cut taxes for 15 million working Americans and rewarded work over welfare. We collected a record level of child support in 1993—\$9 billion—and last month I signed an executive order to crack down on federal employees who owe child support. In two years, we have granted waivers from federal rules to 25 states, so that half the country is now carrying out significant welfare reform experiments that promote work and responsibility instead of undermining it.

I have always sought to make welfare reform a bipartisan issue. I still believe it can and must be. Unfortunately, the House Republican bill in its current form does not appear to offer the kind of real welfare reform that Americans in both parties expect. It is too weak on moving people from welfare to work, not as tough as it should be on dead-beat parents, and too tough on innocent children.